1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

775 insects, and to roam on this earth; but this idea of transmigration
764 of souls has been probably borrowed from the Hindus. Bivar
825 writes that although the ideas of a Godhead are not clearly grasped, yet a supreme creator is acknowledged, and that the
[776] following is the tradition relating to the creation of man. "God in the beginning having created man, placed him on the
773 earth, but on returning to look at him, found he had been destroyed by the evil spirit. This happened a second time, whereupon the Deity created first a dog, then a man; and the dog, who kept watch, prevented the devil from destroying the man,
772 and the work of the Deity was thus preserved." The Khasis,
783 apparently, do not believe in punishment after death, at least,
775 there is no idea of hell, although the spirits of those who have died under the ban of *sang* remain uneasy, being obliged to wander about the earth in different forms, as noted above. The
776 spirits worshipped by the Khasis are many in number, those of
787 the Syntengs being specially numerous. The particular spirit
782 to be propitiated is ascertained by egg-breaking. The offering acceptable to the spirit is similarly ascertained and is then made. If the particular sacrifice does not produce the result desired, a fowl is sacrificed; the entrails being then examined, an augury is drawn, and the sacrifice begins afresh. As the process of egg-breaking is believed to be peculiar * to the Khasis amongst the Assam hill tribes, a separate
[778] description of it is given in the Appendix. It should be remarked that the Khasis never symbolize their gods by means of images, their worship being offered to the spirit only. The following are some of the principal spirits worshipped by the
[769] Khasis and Syntengs, omitting the spirits of deceased ancestors such as *Ka Iawebi*, *u Thawlang*, and *u Suidnia*, which will be described under the heading of ancestor-worship.

776 *Ubi mulak*—the god of the State, who is propitiated yearly
782 by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.

Ubi umtong—the god of water, used for drinking and cooking purposes. This god is similarly propitiated once a year, so that the water supply may remain pure.

* Sir Charles Lyall has pointed out that the Mikirs possess this custom; it is probably borrowed from the Khasis.

arrows for their markings and arrange the whole contest. 526

Early in the morning on the day of the contest, each judge, accompanied by the archers and several curious people, goes to the place of the festivity. There he stands before the target, which was set up the day before. The bows and arrows are placed beside the target. The judge now proclaims aloud again 526 all the conditions of the contest. He calls upon the Khasi Eve (ka-mei-ka-nong-hukum (25) 782

25. The Khasi believe that arrow shooting began with the creation of the world. For the Khasi Eve had two sons. She taught them the art of arrow shooting but warned them at the same time never to lose their tempers while playing. Gurdon, The Khasis, p.55. [772]

for her help and in a rambling speech recites all the errors of the opponents (26). While

26. The Khasi believe that the opponents' arrows will be kept from hitting the target by invoking the Khasi Eve and by the utterances of the judge. Gurdon, p. 55.

he is speaking thus, he pours water /616/ from time to time out of a bamboo tube that was brought along in front of the target. Because of the talkativeness of the Khasi and their peculiarity of talking extemporaneously and their slowness this lasts about two hours.

16: McCormack E-4,5 (1956-1958) 1964
[P. 112 A] AR7 Khasi AR7

God or Goddess, deities regarded as helpful in bringing prosperity, producing fertility, and so on. Rituals of this kind are no longer practiced, except for the Bedingkhlam ceremony designed to protect the Jaintia village of Jowai. Finally, the state religion of many chiefdoms was expressed in one great ceremony per year which was intended to secure ancestral blessing for a chief and his lineage, and, through this, for the entire chiefdom. The notable example, still practiced, is the Pomblang Syiem of Khyrim chiefdom. [Cf. Lyngdoh 1937; 1946; Stegmiller 1924b; Becker 1909.] **Illness and medicine.** In time of illness, a Khasi calls in a sacrificer, and possibly also a medicine man. The medicine man is an ordinary individual who has hit upon some herbal remedy for one or more ailments, who has become famous enough to be sought out and rewarded in cash, and who jealously guards the formula of his medicine until it dies with him. He and his patients tend to regard him as specially blessed. **Soul, death, and afterlife.** The universe is comprised of a heaven, the earth, and the air between. Heaven is where the souls of deceased mortals live in eternal peace, grouped sib by sib. The earth and all nature were created by God, and everything that God created has its own individual soul. There is no other great earth deity, for it was God who created the earth. The air is inhabited by the wandering souls of those dead for whom full death rites were not performed. A Khasi's potentiality for enjoying an afterlife in heaven with his ancestors depends on his receiving proper death rites at the hands of his sib mates. First, his body is cremated by his children, notably his youngest daughter, and his bones are collected and deposited temporarily in a small stone receptacle. All work stops in the village while everyone participates in the funeral. Once every several years, an entire sib gathers to witness the transfer of the bones of recently deceased sib mates from their temporary receptacles to the great sib cairn that is in the keeping of the youngest daughter, descended from the sib ancestress through a line of youngest daughters. This final ceremony covers five days, and is elaborate and expensive, but when an individual's bones are finally resting with those of his antecedents in the cairn, it is understood that his soul is finally in heaven, "eating betel nut in the house of God."

782 [178] 796 178 [113] (975) 775 (972) 764 765

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